

Message Text

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ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SY-04 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 EB-11 FMC-04 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 CG-00

COA-02 DLOS-07 SWF-02 DRC-01 /071 W

----- 071163

R 071545Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BERN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9134

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, EEC, SZ

SUBJECT: US LASH/SEABEE OPERATIONS

REF: A) STATE 99914; B) BERN 1815

1. BOHNERT, DIRECTOR, SWISS OFFICE OF MARITIME NAVIGATION, IN LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF JUNE 4 DESCRIBED BACKGROUND AND STATUS EFFORTS NEGOTIATE AGREEMENT ON REGULATION OF CAPACITY ON RHINE. WITH REGARD PARA 2, REF A, BOHNERT SAID PROTOCOL HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR MANNHEIM TREATY SIGNATORIES TO MODIFY ARTICLE III SO AS TO ALLOW PAYMENT OF FEES BY SHIPS ENGAGING IN RHINE TRANSPORT DURING PERIOD OF VALIDITY OF PROPOSED AGREEMENT. AGREEMENT ITSELF WOULD PRESUMABLY BE BETWEEN EC AND SWITZERLAND BUT POSSIBLY BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND THOSE EC MEMBER STATES DIRECTLY INVOLVED. BOHNERT SAID THIS AND MANY OTHER ASPECTS NOT YET DECIDED. EARLY RESOLUTION NOT EXPECTED IN LARGE PART BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCES WITHIN EC RE WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE ONE OR SEVERAL FUNDS, WHICH WATERWAYS SHOULD BE COVERED, ETC.

2. BOHNERT EMPHASIZED THAT PROPOSED SCHEME IS INTENDED
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DEAL ONLY WITH TEMPORARY SEASONAL OVER-CAPACITY SITUATION

TIONS AND WAS NOT SEEN AS METHOD ADJUST TO STRUCTURAL CHANGES. INDEMNITY PAYMENTS TO SHIP OWNERS WHO KEEP VESSELS IDLE DURING PERIOD OF DECLARED OVER-CAPACITY WOULD BE DESIGNED PROVIDE VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO PRESENT SITUATION OF THEIR ENGAGING IN CARRIAGE IN ORDER TRY RECOUP SOME OF FIXED COSTS WITH RESULT THAT SOME FREIGHT RATES FORCED TO UNECONOMIC LOW LEVELS.

3. SWISS CONTINUE FAVOR LOWEST POSSIBLE RHINE FARES AND CONTINUED FREE ACCESS BUT ALSO SEEK THROUGH INDEMNITY SCHEME GREATER STABILITY AND LESS UNCERTAINTY FOR SWISS SHIP OWNERS ON RHINE.

4. BOHNERT AGREED WITH EMBOFF THAT KEY QUESTION OF INTEREST TO USG IS WHAT CONSTITUTES "ENGAGING IN RHINE TRANSPORT" AND SEEMED TO ACCEPT ARGUMENT THAT VESSEL WHICH MERELY DISCHARGES CARGO BROUGHT FROM OUTSIDE RHINE SYSTEM AND/OR PICKS UP CARGO TO BE CARRIED OUTSIDE SYSTEM IS NOT ENGAGED IN RHINE TRANSPORT AS SUCH, NOR IS IT DIRECTLY COMPETITIVE WITH THOSE BARGES CONFRONTED WITH SEASONAL OVER-CAPACITY PROBLEM. HE THOUGHT UK, GERMANY, AND NETHERLANDS AGREED WITH THIS INTERPRETATION BUT THAT QUESTION WAS STILL VERY OPEN. BOHNERT EXPRESSED OPINION THAT SOME SORT OF RECIPROCITY RULE MIGHT BE ADOPTED FOR TREATMENT OF VESSELS FROM NON-RHINE NATIONS.

5. WE GAINED OVERALL IMPRESSION THAT GOS HAS NOT YET ADOPTED POSITION ON QUESTION OF FEES ON LASH/SEABEE BARGES AND ON SEVERAL OTHER ISSUES RELATING TO CAPACITY SCHEME AND DOES NOT EXPECT TO DO SO UNTIL CLOSER TO DATE (STILL UNDERTERMINED) WHEN ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORTATION, CARGO SHIPS, TRANSPORTATION TAXES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BERN02164
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740146-0760
From: BERN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740666/aaaacfaw.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION L
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A) STATE 99914; B) BERN 1815
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 APR 2002 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <17 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US LASH/SEABEE OPERATIONS
TAGS: ETRN, SZ, US, EEC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005